

## PRESS RELEASES

# On Senate Floor, Sen. Warner Responds to Mueller Testimony (/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=6D511F7A-4E84-4212-BFFC-730328E330B5)

Jul 24 2019

WASHINGTON — Following Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s testimony regarding Russia’s interference in the 2016 election, U.S. Sen. Mark R. Warner (D-VA), Vice Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, led a group of Senators asking for votes on several pieces of legislation to improve election security and protect our democracy ahead of 2020. All of the requests were blocked by Senate Republicans, who, led by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and the White House, have resisted legislative efforts to secure our elections against foreign interference in future elections.

“Earlier today, Special Counsel Robert Mueller testified that the Russian government’s efforts to undermine our elections are, quote, ‘among the most serious challenges to our democracy.’ A challenge, he says, that ‘deserves the attention of every American.’ Mr. Mueller’s testimony should serve as a warning to every member of this body about what could happen in 2020, literally in our next elections, if we fail to act,” **Sen. Warner said on the Senate floor in making the request.** “When asked if he thought that Russia would attack our democracy again in 2020, Mr. Mueller said ‘they are doing it as we sit here.’ Think about that for a moment. The special prosecutor spent two and a half years looking into Russian intervention in our election in 2016 and says not only are they going to do it, but they are doing it as we sit here.”

**Warner added,** “Now, if this is was just coming from the special prosecutor, some folks might be willing to dismiss it, but this is exact the same message we heard earlier this week from FBI Director Wray. It’s a message that all of us have heard – and I particularly on the Intelligence Committee have heard repeatedly – from Director of National Intelligence Coats, and we have heard this as well from other leaders of law enforcement and our intelligence community. Again, I point out leaders all who were appointed by this president, who have sounded the alarm about the ongoing Russian threat to our elections. Unfortunately, in the nearly three years since we have uncovered Russia’s attack on our democracy, this body has not held a single vote on standalone legislation to protect our elections.”

“I am not looking to relitigate the 2016 election or for that matter, to second-guess the special counsel’s findings. This is more a question of how we defend our democracy on a going-forward basis,” **Warner noted,** before asking for unanimous consent for the Senate to take up and pass his legislation (<https://www.warner.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2019/5/in-response-to-mueller-report-senate-intel-vice-chair-warner-introduces-legislation-to-require-campaigns-to-report-foreign-contacts>) that would require presidential campaigns to report to the appropriate federal authorities any contacts from foreign nationals seeking to interfere in a presidential election, which was rejected by a Republican Senator acting on behalf of Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

This is the second time Republicans have rejected Sen. Warner’s attempt to pass the *Foreign Influence Reporting in Elections (FIRE) Act* (<https://www.warner.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2019/5/in-response-to-mueller-report-senate-intel-vice-chair-warner-introduces-legislation-to-require-campaigns-to-report-foreign-contacts>). After Sen. Warner made a previous attempt to pass the bill by unanimous consent last month, President Donald Trump thanked (<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1139640264862162944?lang=en>) Senate Republicans for blocking the measure via Twitter, instead launching an attack (<https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1139645936945324032?s=20>) on Sen. Warner for raising the issue in the first place.

**Sen. Warner’s remarks as prepared for delivery can be found below:**

*Mr. President, in a moment I will ask unanimous consent for the Senate to take up and pass legislation I’ve introduced to help protect our democracy from foreign interference.*

*Earlier today, Special Counsel Mueller testified that the Russian government's efforts to undermine our elections are "among the most serious challenges to our democracy" – a challenge he says "deserves the attention of every American."*

*Mr. Mueller's testimony should serve as a warning to every member of this body about what could happen in 2020, if we fail to act.*

*When asked if he thought Russia would attack our democracy again in 2020, Mr. Mueller said, "they are doing it as we sit here."*

*This echoes what we've heard from Director Wray, DNI Coats, and others who are sounding the alarm about the ongoing Russian threat to our elections.*

*Unfortunately, in the nearly three years since we uncovered Russia's attack on our democracy, this body has not held a vote on standalone legislation to protect our elections.*

*Mr. President, I am not here to re-litigate the 2016 election or second-guess the Special Counsel's findings. This is a question of how we defend our democracy on a going-forward basis.*

*Just over a month ago, the President of the United States sat in the oval office and effectively gave Russia the green light to interfere in future elections. Since then, my Republican colleagues have done nothing to prevent future attempts at undermining our democracy.*

*Let me be clear. If a foreign adversary tries to offer assistance to your campaign, you have a moral obligation to call the FBI.*

*Mr. Mueller, the former FBI Director and arguably the straightest arrow in public service, said as much this afternoon.*

*So if the President, or his son-in-law, or other members of his campaign can't be trusted to do the right thing and report their foreign contacts, then we need to make it a legal requirement. That's what the FIRE Act is all about.*

*The FIRE Act is a simple, narrowly targeted bill. All it does is make sure attempts to interfere in future presidential elections are promptly reported to the FBI and FEC.*

*The FIRE Act is not about prohibiting innocent contacts or the exercise of First Amendment rights.*

*Contrary to some of the mistaken rhetoric we've heard, it does not require reporting of contacts with foreign journalists, or DREAMers, or official meetings with foreign governments.*

*It is simply about preserving Americans' trust in the democratic process.*

*If a candidate is receiving or welcoming help from the Kremlin, I think the American people should have a right to know that before they head to the polls.*

*And in a world where campaigns are a target for foreign espionage, I think our law enforcement and counter-intelligence professionals should have the tools they need to protect the integrity of our presidential elections.*

*This is not a Republican or Democratic issue; it is an issue of America's national security.*

*And I hope the Senate can come together at this moment to send a clear message that we will defend our Democracy, even if this President won't.*

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